DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 668 SP 028 254

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TITLE Education in American Society: Aims for Schools.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship Education; *Creative Thinking; *Divergent Thinking; Educational History; *Educational Objectives; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *Self Actualization; Values Education

ABSTRACT

In considering the aims or purposes of education in America today, this reflective discussion first reviews the aims of education since the founding of the United States, as well as those antecedent aims in the history of the Western education experience. An overview of changing trends in educational objectives illuminates the gradual development of societal attitudes on the meaning of citizenship and the definition of an educated person. The general thrust of educational aims has been a sense that, in addition to students' capacity to read and compute, educational programs should also link knowledge and skills with an understanding of, and commitment to, democratic principles and their application. Such programs begin in preschool and continue throughout formal education. They foster individual and cultural identity and include observation of, and participation in, the school and community as part of the curriculum. Ideally, they also deal with critical issues and the world as it really is and prepare students to make intelligent decisions. Such programs depend on teachers broadly prepared in history and the humanities and involve community members as resources for program development and student involvement. Exemplary school programs should present knowledge about the historical derivation and contemporary application of democractic beliefs which are essential to the understanding of American society and its institutions. (JD)

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EDUCATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY: AIMS FOR SCHOOLS

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MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY 40351
FALL, 1986

SP 028 254

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> It is my contention that teaching has the best chance of being successful (i.e., the greatest chance of promoting student learning) when teachers think about where they want to go before they start going there (wherever "there" may be). Jack R. Fraenkel[1]

Jack R. Fraenkel states that in the main, aims, or goals, and objectives that we seek to attain depends upon: (1) Our philosophy of education--what we consider worth learning, (2) The characteristics of the learners involved, and (3) Skills in interacting with learners in the classroom.[2] "Do they really help improve the education process, or is their formation merely a rite of passage for the novice and a ritualistic exercise for the more experienced educator?" Fraenkel asks in a quotation of Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus from the HANDBOOK ON FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATION.[3] He notes that aims, or goals, are broader and more long-range than objectives and answers the question with a quotation of F. R. Kappel from VITALITY IN A BUSINESS ENTERPRISE. An aim, or goal, may be, according to Kappel:

> ...something presently out of reach; it is something to strive for, to move toward, or to become. It is an aim or purpose so stated that it excites the imagination and gives people something they want to work for, something they don't know how to do, something they can be proud of when they achieve it.[4]

According to James H. Johnson,as one attempts to analyze aims and objectives for education it is necessary to distinguish between the two as they relate to the total school program. Aims, for the purposes of curriculum development, are considered to be those broad goals for the system as a whole. Objectives, on the other hand, are those expected learned behaviors that the curriculum is intended to produce.[5]

Educational aims and objectives are differentiated by Johnson in a hierarchy ranging from broad general aims to very specific instructional objectives. The aims are:

(1) The broad aims of education stated by national organizations,

(2) Statements of aims by regional associations,

(3) Statements of aims by state departments of education,

(4) Statements of aims by local school systems,

(5) Subject area behavioral objectives,

(6) Behavioral objectives for courses of study,

(7) Block or unit/behavioral/instructional objectives, and

(8) Instructional objectives for daily lessons.[6]

When considering the aims or purposes of education in America today, it is essential to review the aims of education since the founding of our nation--as well as those antecedent aims in the history of the Western educational experience. Gerald L. Gutek states that "As one who is engaged in preparing teachers in the foundations of education, I am concerned about what appears to be an overemphasis on the empirical and

statistical aspects of teacher education." He further notes that "these are necessary and useful instruments for the teacher," but states..."the humanistic purposes of education must receive renewed emphasis and not be forgotten..."[7] He concludes that

> I view the history of Western education as a humanistic discipline that illuminates the development of both formal and informal educational agencies, movements, and trends. It is also an instrument for examining alternative conceptions of the educated man in a historical perspective. By examining the prevailing thought of an age, one can discover its patterns of education. Finally, I believe that the study of educational history is a worthwhile and valuable experience in its own right since it explains a part of the human experience.[8]

With these thoughts in mind, let us review some of the main aims in Western education. In Athens the goal of education was viewed as a preparation for citizenship and as rational enlightment of the individual. Education in Rome tended to be more practical than that in Athens. The obligations of citizenship were stressed, much more so than the speculative philosophy of the Greeks. The spiritual aspect of education was supreme during the Medieval period--sometimes designated as the Middle Ages--because it was that period bridging the classical Greek and Roman Periods with the later rebirth of these cultures and learnings during the Renaissance around 1400. During the Renaissance a different ideal of education emerged in which education emphasized spiritual collectivism and man's natural capacities. From 1600 to the present is

usually designated as the Enlightment Period in education, or the Age of Reason. Important educators during this time include Jean Rousseau, who developed the concept of natural education, and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi was a follower of Rousseau and felt that education should be based on the nature and development of the child and that the teacher should proceed from the concrete to the abstract in teaching. Also highly significant to the development of natural education in this period was Friedrich Froebel, regarded as the founder of the kindergarten. Their influence was to impact on American education in the latter part of the 1800's.

In 1642 Massachusetts passed a law ordering that all children should be taught to read. A milestone was reached in 1647 when another law was passed in that colony which provided that towns of fifty or more were required to maintain an elementary school. Towns of one hundred or more were required to provide both elementary and secondary schools.

The first secondary schools in America were the Latin Grammar Schools brought to the colonies from England. In 1635 the Boston Public Latin School was established, which set the pattern for the other colonies and became the dominant type of secondary school until about 1775.

The classical curriculum of the Boston Latin Grammar School is contained in a Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Education for the Year 1903.[9] It notes that children entered at the

age of seven, having already learned to read English. Studies continued through the seventh year to thirteen years of age with Latin verse composition and selected works of Horace, Ovid, Vergil, and Xenophon. Preparation for college was the thrust.

In 1751 Ben Franklin started his academy in Philadelphia. Franklin was a pioneer in American education and his tuition academies soon became the dominant type of secondary school. Franklin was more practical in his views regarding education. He stated:

> As to their studies, it would be well if they could be taught everything that is useful and everything that is ornamental; but art is long, and their time is short. It is therefore proposed that they learn those things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental, regard being had to the several professions for which they are intended.[10]

The academy was originally designed to prepare boys to take their places in society without college experience. It offered the practical and newer subjects such as history, English, algebra, chemistry, geography, and modern languages instead of the classical Latin and Greek. Thomas Jefferson, very influential in forming public attitudes toward education in the Colonial period, advocated a classical education of excellence and proposed an education based upon ability.

"The Father of American Education" is the honor generally attributed to Horace Mann, who won many reforms in education. His contributions include the idea that education should be

universal, free, and non-sectarian; the organization of the normal schools in Massachusetts into a state system; the enactment of compulsory school laws; the securing of adequate school buildings, increased salaries for teachers, a longer school year, and additional appropriations for schools. Mann lived from 1796 to 1859. Frederick Eby notes that compulsory school attendance was adopted first by Massachusetts in 1852 and that:

> In the next half century it was legally accepted by 34 Northern States; and between 1905 and 1918 it was belatedly adopted by all the States in the South that had not already acted.[11]

The first public school was established in Boston in 1821. It was supported by public taxes, whereas the academy was supported by tuition.

The English Classical School was renamed the English High School in 1824 and its curriculum was varied. For example:

> The course for the first year includes Intellectual and Written Arithmetic, Geography and the use of Globes, exercises in Grammar, General History, and History of the United States, Bookkeeping by single entry, Elements of some Arts and Sciences, the second year embraces Geometry, Algebra, Trigonometry and its applications, Bookkeeping by double entry, various branches of Natural Philosophy, Natural History, Chemistry, Moral Philosophy and Natural Theology, Rhetoric, Evidences of Christianity, Intellectual Philosophy, Political Economy, and Logic.[12]

In 1861 the course of study in Chicago offered students two choices: A General Course of Study or a Classical Course of Study.[13] The report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary

School Studies in 1893 had a tremendous impact on the modern high school curriculum. Further alternatives in the program of study were proposed, but English and foreign languages were included in all variations.[14] The Committee of Ten on Requirements for Admission to College in 1893 stated that "the secondary schools of the United States, taken as a whole, do not exist for the purpose of preparing boys and girls for college."[15] However, the Committee was of the opinion "that the satisfactory completion of any one of the four years' courses of study embodied in the foregoing programs should admit to corresponding courses in college and scientific schools."[16]

John Dewey's philosophy of education was strengthened with the founding of the Progressive Education Association in 1919. Kneller has summarized the principles of progressive education as follows: (1) Education should be active and related to interests of the child, (2) A person handles the novelty and perplexity of life most successfully when he breaks his experiences down into specific problems, (3) Education, as an intelligent reconstruction of experience, is synonymous with civilized living, (4) Since the child should learn in accordance with his own needs and interests, the teacher should act more as a guide or advisor than as a figure of authority, (5) Individuals achieve more when they work with, rather than against one another, and (6) Education and democracy imply each other; hence, the schools should be run democratically.[17]

Since the establishment of education in America, numerous efforts have been made to describe the aims of education. The following seven basic goals of education, the Seven Cardinal Principles, were identified in 1918 by the Commission of the reorganization of Secondary Education: (1) Good health, (2) Command of fundamental processes, (3) Worthy home membership, (4) Vocational efficiency, (5) Civic education, (6) Worthy use of leisure time, and (7) Ethical character. This statement represents a change from subject-centered goals to student-centered goals, a change strongly influenced by the progressivist's philosophy. The National Education Association formulated social-economic goals for schools in 1933. These goals were identified: (1) Hereditary strength, (2) Physical security, (3) Participation in a growing civilization, (4) A dynamic, flexible personality, (5) Suitable occupation, (6) Mental security, (7) Equality of opportunity, (8) Freedom, and (9) Fair play. A report entitled THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION IN AN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY was issued by the Education Policies Commission in 1938. The report emphasized four main areas: (1) Self-realization, (2) Effective human relationships, (3) Economic efficiency, and (4) Civic responsibility.[18]

Gutek identifies six major trends in American education during the 20th Century: (1) John Dewey's development of experimentalist education philosophy, (2) The rise of progressive education, (3) The acceptance of the high school

as a major institution of secondary education, (4) The quantitative and qualitative extension of higher education, (5) A further development of teacher education, and (6) A movement to achieve racially integrated society.[19]

Fredrick Mayer summarizes the main aims of education in America today as:

(1) Reflective thinking,
(2) Appreciation of culture,
(3) Development of creativity,
(4) Understanding and application of science,
(5) Contact with great ideas,
(6) Moral and Spiritual values,
(7) Fundamental skills,
(8) Vocational efficiency,
(9) Effective education implying a better adjustment to family life,
(10) Effective citizenship,
(11) Physical and mental health,
(12) Personality education,
(13) Education that gives us permanent interests,
(14) Achievement of peace, and the perpetual Renaissance of man.[20]

In A HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION, H. G. Good states that "the new history of education deals especially with the public school as an instrument of public policy," and further states that "the school is such an instrument but it must

remain a means to an enriched life for the individual person and the local community."[21]

It may be noted that in 1979 twelve professional associations, including the National Council for the Social Studies, reaffirmed the value of a balanced education in THE ESSENTIALS OF EDUCATION STATEMENT. In addition to students' capacity to read and compute, educational programs should also link knowledge and skills with an understanding of and commitment to democratic principles and their application. Such programs: (1) Begin in pre-school and continue throughout formal education and include a range of related electives at the secondary level, (2) Foster individual and cultural identity, (3) Include observation of and participation in the school and community as part of the curriculum, (4) Deal with critical issues and the world as it really is, (5) Prepare students to make decisions based on American principles, (6) Demand high standards of performance and measure more than the memorization of information, (7) Depend on innovative teachers broadly prepared in history, the humanities, the social sciences, educational theory and practice, (8) Involve community members as resources for program development and student involvement, and (9) Lead to citizenship participation in public affairs.[22]

In addition to these aims, exemplary school programs should present knowledge about the historical derivation and contemporary application of democratic beliefs which are essential to the understanding of our society and its institutions.

These democratic beliefs depend on such practices as due process, equal protection and civic participation, and are seated in the concepts of: (1) Justice, (2) Equality, (3) Responsibility, (4) Freedom, (5) Diversity, and (6) Privacy. Thinking skills should be taught which includes:

(1) Data gathering skills,

(2) Intellectual skills,

(3) Decision making skills,

(4) Interpersonal skills, and

(5) Participation skills.[23]

In summary, it is evident that aims, goals, and objectives are of great importance to effective education. As noted by Fraenkel, they establish educational purpose; they suggest the major emphases by which to design an educational program; and, they provide a consistent focus for curriculum planning and development.[24]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Jack R. Fraenkel, Helping Students Think and Value; Strategies for Teaching the Social Studies (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), p. 2.

[2]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[3]Ibid., p. 5.

[4]Ibid., p. 8.

[5]James H. Johnson, et. al., Introduction to the Foundations of American Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982), p. 345.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Gerald L. Gutek, A History of the Western Educational Experience (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), pp. 8-9.

[8]Ibid., p. 12.

[9]"Boston Latin Grammar School (Founded 1635)--Course of Study--1773," Secondary Education (London: THe Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 155-156.

[10]"Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania 1749," Secondary Education (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 157-159.

[11]Frederick Eby, The Development of Modern Education (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 559.

[12]"The English Classical School (in 1924) Renamed as the English High School," Secondary Education (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 98.

[13]Course of Study--Chicago High School (Central) (1861)," Secondary Education (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 159-161.

[14]"The Committee of Ten Proposes a Program of Study for Secondary Schools (1893),"Secondary Education (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), pp. 162-164.

[15]"The Committee of Ten on Requirements for Admission to College (1893)," Secondary Education (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 164.

[16]Ibid., p. 166.

[17]George F. Kneller, Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), pp. 94-96.

[18]Frederick Mayer, A History of Educational Thought (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 11-12.

[19]Gutek, Op. Cit., p. 94.

[20]Mayer, Op. Cit., pp. 12-15.

[21]H. G. Good, A History of American Education (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. vi.

[22]"Essentials of the Social Studies," Social Education, March, 1981, pp. 163-164.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Fraenkel, Op. Cit., p. 8.

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